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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE



Monday, January 12, 1942

Subject: "HOUSEHOLD JOBS THAT PAY." Information from the Extension Service,
U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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One way to save a little here and there so as to have more cash for defense savings stamps and bonds, and more free time to devote to the many new war-time calls on a homemaker's time, is to study the way you spend your day now, and cut out those jobs that take too much time for the results obtained.

If you look closely at the different things you spend your time on, you'll find some of them are more worth while than others. In popular language, it "pays" better to do them. That word "pays" doesn't mean money actually earned. It means money not spent, by doing the work yourself instead of hiring jobs done, or buying something ready-made in a store. In the sense that your money has not been spent, you still have it to put to any good use.

This saving is often called the rate per hour you "earn" by what you do. In a way, it's a useful measure of the value of different home tasks. Then, if you want to find extra minutes, you can drop the jobs that don't "pay" well. Concentrate on those that do. And learn to do routine, necessary, poor-paying jobs in less time, if possible.

A report recently received by the U. S. Department of Agriculture from the Nebraska State Extension Service tells about a study made last year by Nebraska farm women. These women wanted to find out what household jobs paid best when figured on an hourly basis. Of course some women work fast, some slowly. The amount saved by one homemaker on a certain piece of work would be different for another. But there is quite a range of choice in how a woman spends her time, outside of the jobs she has to do anyway.

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Any woman can make a study similar to the one these Nebraska women made.

Here's how they went about it:

They wrote down the quantity of each product made--quarts of tomatoes canned, dresses made, loaves of bread baked. Then they listed for each item the materials used and their cost, the value of fuel used, and any overhead cost for use of equipment. The difference between the total cost of a product and its value if bought at retail was the saving, of course. Divide the money savings by the time spent and you have the hourly value of that kind of work.

For example, take home sewing. Eighty-four women reported that the value of the time spent making their own dresses averaged 32 cents an hour. Making aprons; 18 cents an hour. But 24 women said that on coats, suits, and made-over garments their time was worth 48 cents an hour. Let's put that another way: If a coat costs \$15 in a store and you buy the materials for \$7 and make it yourself, you save \$8. Say it took you 16 hours to make the coat -- your time was worth about 50 cents an hour.

On home canning the average earnings varied a good deal according to what was canned. Canning soups paid 10 women at the rate of \$1.10 an hour. Fruit canning, 58 cents, tomato and vegetable canning, about 62 cents. A few women reported meat canning. They averaged \$1.26 an hour for the time spent.

Other ordinary foods which can either be made in the kitchen or bought in stores were "timed" in a similar way when home-made. A hundred and eleven women said their time was worth 39 cents an hour when they made the family bread. Making butter, cake, cookies, cheese, doughnuts, and pies all showed an hourly return of over 40 cents, while making jelly and ice cream gave the Nebraska homemakers well over a dollar an hour. All these products used material produced at home. Of course the season varies the value of eggs, butter and some other home-

grown products, and at times it pays to market them. Understand that these reports do not mean products sold. The figures are for the value of an hour's time when compared with cash expenditures for the same foods in the stores.

Cash savings on soap making reported by 135 women averaged a dollar and five cents an hour. The study included a great many other items produced at home on which these farm women considered they had worth while returns. For example, making ready-to-serve cereals, candy, cranberry sauce, maple sirup, noodles, salad dressings, small rugs, layettes, tea towels, corn pickers' sleeves, sheets and pillow cases, hand creams and lotions; shelling walnuts; knitting sweaters and mittens, hanging paper, housecleaning, shampooing, dry cleaning, laying linoleum, and hatching chickens.

Here are a few comments made by these same Nebraskan homemakers:

"It is worth while to make clothing....more durable quality material, more sturdy construction, fits better."

"Doing my own laundry costs me 48 cents. Having it done by someone else would amount to \$3.00. I feel that the difference of \$2.52 a week, or \$131.04 a year, indeed makes it worth my time and energy to perform this task myself."

"I can have fine soap out of grease that would otherwise go to waste."

"Living expenses are cut very materially by home canning."

"I know it pays to can at home. We can use as many fruits and vegetables as we like....which we could not do if we had to pay cash."

"It pays to bake cookies because we are using our own home-produced eggs, milk, etc."

Well, that gives you some idea of the value of a homemaker's time. When you find out what jobs pay you best, you can do those, and stop spending time on activities that are worth but little. Perhaps you can give that time to your community when called on to aid in defense activites.

: Remember Pearl Harbor :
